

STEWARDS' MEETING MINUTES
Monday, February 24, 2014
5:30 – 7:30 pm 3026 Social Science Centre

Called to order 5:39PM

PSAC Statement on Harassment

Read by Greg

Conan acting as coordinator

Approvals

a. minutes

moved by 28

seconded by 13

passed unanimously

b. agenda

moved by 19

seconded by 11

passed unanimously

Report from the President

Report from the Finance Chair

Report from the Administration Chair

Report from the Activism Chair

Report from the Chief Steward, Biosciences

Report from the Chief Steward, Arts & Humanities

Report from the Chief Steward, Social Sciences

Report from the Food Bank Committee

Motions

1. Food Bank

2. Financial Assistance – Child Care

3. International TA UHIP Refund Disbursement Policy

4. Payroll

Appendix A: Revised Disbursement Policy for the Financial Assistance Committee

Appendix B: Revised International TA UHIP Refund Policy

Report from the President

A new collective agreement for Local 611 (Post Doctoral Associates) was negotiated in the fall term. Membership ratified the agreement in November and the new agreement was signed in January.

We have continued to receive updates from the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) regarding the standing of the lump sum grievance filed by the Local in March 2013. A small number of grievors admitted in 2012 have been compensated, but the majority of grievances remain under review by the relevant Faculties.

The potential for overwork exists for many of our members. Under the terms of our collective agreement, TAs cannot be expected to work more than 140 hours per term; more than 8 hours per day; and more than 20 hours per week. Stewards can remind members in their departments of the importance of course instructors meeting with their TAs at the mid-point of their appointment to review the TA's Duties Specification Agreement. The TA and course supervisor may agree to redistribute hours within the DSA.

As TAs approach their maximum number of hours for the term, it is crucial that they inform their course supervisor. If the course supervisor indicates a desire for their TAs to work overtime, they should be reminded that overtime hours must be approved by SGPS in advance of those hours being worked. TAs have the right to refuse to work beyond 140 hours, assuming they have given sufficient notice to their course supervisor, and it is important that TAs either stop working at 140 hours *or* receive approval for overtime before working beyond 140 hours.

We need volunteers to test an hours tracking cell phone app. It is the responsibility of TAs to make sure that we do not work more hours than we are paid, and also to ensure that if we are being asked to go over, that we are compensated with overtime pay. To that end, we would like to explore the use of digital hours-tracking apps or software (such as Timesheet) in order to determine the pros, cons, and general effectiveness of the software in protecting against overwork. The pilot program would simply require that you track your hours for the remainder of this term using Timesheet, keep notes about what you like and do not like about it, and then sit down for a focus group style session with other users (and members of the executive) to discuss the software after the term ends. If you are interested in participating, please contact either president@psac610.ca or communications@psac610.ca.

Local 610 Stewards' Meeting in November passed a motion indicating Local 610's support for the campaign for post residency fees at Western. The campaign has continued since then and has gained significant support amongst graduate students at Western. The Society of Graduate Students (SOGS) is holding a referendum on the question "*Are you in favour of a fifty (50) percent reduction in tuition fees for all graduate students once they reach the post-residency phase of their degree, that is to say, the completion of course work and the formal*

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commencement of their thesis or dissertation project?” during the week of March 17. Please remind your colleagues of the importance of voting in this vital referendum.

I am continuing to work with the presidents of PSAC Local’s 555 and 901 and with the Regional Executive Vice-President of PSAC to create an annual academic worker training session and to improve methods of sharing information and strategies.

There are several important proposals for your consideration today. Motion #1, submitted by the Food Bank Committee, requests an additional \$3000 be added to their budget in order to meet the needs of our membership. The FBC’s report explains the need for this increase - heightened awareness of this service has led to increased use of the Local’s food bank program, underscoring the severe financial straits TAs at Western are in. While this is a temporary measure to accommodate increased requests for the food bank program this year, the FBC has also recommended that the program’s budget be increased in next year’s budget.

Motion #2 asks that the Stewards pass a revised disbursement policy for the Financial Assistance Committee. Currently, the FAC can fund claims for medical emergencies, personal emergencies, and academic/conference travel. The committee would like to add a child care subsidy to the FAC disbursement criteria (Appendix A). Recognizing that access to affordable child care is a major challenge for members who must balance the responsibilities of parenthood in addition to the duties as workers, researchers and students, this subsidy is intended to act as part of a pilot program to both address a significant need amongst our members and to identify the extent of child care needs amongst our members.

Motion #3 asks you to consider a revised disbursement policy for the International TA UHIP reimbursement program. Local 610 dedicates a portion of the money received from the university as part of the Financial Assistance Fund (a fund we have successfully negotiated for through collective bargaining) to reimbursements for international TAs who must pay for a mandatory health insurance program (University Health Insurance Plan). Recognizing that this places an additional financial burden on already-strapped international graduate students, Local 610 has offered a small reimbursement to members who must pay for UHIP. However, in the past this reimbursement has not been fully utilized by eligible members. The revised policy (Appendix B) proposes that eligible members apply to a UHIP reimbursement once a year, and are offered a reimbursement based on the number of eligible applicants.

Our Collective Agreement is only as strong as its enforcement. If a member in your department encounters a workplace issue s/he suspects is a violation of the Collective Agreement, act on it, inform an executive member and help maintain the strength of our collectively bargained rights as workers.

In solidarity,
David Blocker

Motion to accept the President’s Report:
Moved by 28
Seconded by 13
Approved unanimously.

Report from the Finance Chair

Dear Stewards of the PSAC Local 610,
Here is my report,

1. “Strike Fund”:

As per motion passed by the stewards’ on November 2013 meeting, a term deposit of \$250,000 has been created with the local’s existing bank.

2. Budget 2014-2015:

Finance committee is working for the 2014-2015 budget. Please email me (finance@psac610.ca) in-case you have any input for the budget that you would like to be considered by the Finance Committee before February 28th 2014.

3. Payroll for executives and office staffs:

Executives of the local and office staffs are now enrolled into the payroll system with the CRA. This enrolment has been in effect since January 2014.

4. International TA UHIP Refund policy:

Finance committee has worked on a policy to reform the International TA UHIP refund. During the stewards meeting a presentation will be made to address the details of the policy and the motivation behind this policy.

Thanks

Jubayer Chowdhury
Finance Chair

Powerpoint presentation from Finance Committee re UHIP

Question from 38: Are we sure what the problem is with disbursement? Is it simply that people are not picking up cheques?

Jubayer: Sometimes students are done by fall or spring and do not pick up. We are aiming to get to them earlier to allow them to pick up.

Question: Are you looking at other dates for picking up?

Jubayer: We thought about it and we can see how it goes and revise. For this we can introduce this year

44: What happens to the money that is not picked up?

Jubayer: It went to general account. We separated out an account for ta needs and bursaries.

40: If the issue is that people are out of the country can you mail them?

Conan: We do.

Jubayer: We try, but don’t always have addresses.

31: It seems less likely people would fill out an application. Mail to department?

Jubayer: We are trying to contact members. Everyone plays a role in reaching eligible people. Stewards can help with this. Cheques would wind up sitting in department.

31: Could we work through the grad chair of departments to get people their money?

Jubayer: I understand what we you mean, but we would prefer not to have departments administer these funds, since we don’t know how they would do so.

38: As a steward, I see this as saying that we should be contacting TAs about this since the union is restricted largely to email and website.

Jubayer: Yes, we see this as the best way to move forward.

Eric: As an International student, the amount is very small compared to what I paid in UHIP. A lot of people will ignore it. The people who need it most will be motivated to apply.

Dave: We can debate the motion later. Right now is the time for questions about the report.

Atle: I call the question.

Motion to approve the Finance Chair's report

Approved unanimously.

Report from the Administration Chair

EHP Policy

I am happy to report that, since the last Stewards Meeting, we have finalized the Extended Health Plan (EHP) policy, and it has been passed unanimously by the Executive of Local 610. I also presented copies of the EHP policy to the Employer's Labour Management Committee. Thank you to everyone who asked questions and gave feedback at the last meeting. Special thanks go to our excellent EHP administrator, Dylan Gault, for all of his great work.

Office Equipment Update

In accordance with the motion passed at the last Stewards Meeting, we have replaced some of the equipment in our office. Fortunately, the replacement of the desk computer in the boardroom came not a moment too soon, as the old one ceased functioning just as the new one arrived! The new equipment was chosen with care to ensure both cost-efficiency and environmental responsibility. The cost breakdown is as follows:

Compact Refrigerator \$199.99

Microwave \$139.99

HP Pavilion 23'' All-in-One PC \$699.99

Office 365 software \$79.99

Adobe Photoshop software \$79.99

Environmental Handling Fees \$12.25

Shipping Fees \$69.95

HST \$166.68

Total: \$1,448.83

Scholarships

PSAC Local 610 awards multiple scholarships every year to members in good standing who demonstrate outstanding achievement in their academic performance, research contribution, or their dedication to community involvement. Having served on the Scholarships Committee last year, I know first hand that our membership displays impressive academic and research talent, as well as a strong commitment to volunteer work in the community. I am very excited to be returning to the committee this year as chair.

The academic achievement scholarship is valued at \$500 and is typically awarded to a total of sixteen members: four for each of the four academic divisions (Arts & Humanities, Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Social Sciences). Within each division the scholarships are offered to two Masters and two Doctoral students. Four scholarships valued at \$400 dollars are awarded to two Masters students and two Doctoral students who have distinguished themselves through their scholarly research

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(including, but not limited to, published articles, conference presentations and workshops). Four scholarships of \$400 are also awarded to two Masters students and two Doctoral students who demonstrate a high level of involvement in activities that benefit the community, for example through volunteer work done on behalf of non-profit organizations.

Applications for the 2013-14 scholarships are now available in the Union office (SH 1313) and online at <http://www.psac610.ca/benefits/scholarship>. The deadline for applications has been extended this year to March 31, 2014.

Financial Assistance for Child Care

I have served on the Financial Assistance Committee for the past two years, and as chair of that committee since last March. One of the aspects of this role that I enjoy most is that it affords me the opportunity to engage directly with members to ascertain and address our most vital needs as workers and students. It has increasingly come to my attention that the lack of affordable, quality child care in Ontario places a tremendous financial burden on many of our members. Though there is still a need to address larger structural issues of accessibility and accommodation for parents on campus (including the need for baby changing stations and nursing/family rooms), I would like to propose that we begin by making evident our commitment to child care by endorsing a subsidy for child care expenses within the existing FAC. This will send a clear message in advance of future collective bargaining with the employer that, despite the repeated failures of federal and provincial governments to respond to the crisis of child care affordability and access, we stand in solidarity with workers struggling to balance the costs of work and family life.

With Respect and Solidarity,
Mary Deminion
Administration Chair
administration@psac610.ca

Questions:

Mary: I had a rather unpleasant meeting with the L/MC in which I presented the revised terms of reference, including child care. I was told that by Carol Beynon that she would tell me what she tells her own daughter: That universal childcare funding is not going to happen and that it is not a problem because, and I quote her here, “The thing about kids is, they grow up.”

Question: So what is happening with child care funding now?

Mary: I have been giving out funding for it anyway.

Motion to accept the Administration Chair’s report:

Moved by 28

Seconded by 16

Approved unanimously.

Report from the Activism Chair

Dear members,

Much of my work as Activism Chair is to oversee the continued and fluid operation of some of our most important services, including our food bank and financial assistance fund. The volunteers who serve on the committees running these services are invaluable and dedicated to the role they play in the provision of financial support to members in need. I will take this opportunity to thank all of them. Briefly, I have spent the last few months on the following activities:

- _Reviewing and modifying disbursement policy with committee members to better serve the diverse needs of teaching assistants. Actions in this regard include changes to the food bank disbursement policy to increase aid to TAs with families per dependent, and a proposal to add child care expenses to those items the financial assistance fund may be used to address.
- _Liaising with and supporting departmental stewards in their activities, including FIMS' recent collective reading group. Funds for refreshments were provided by the Political Action and Social Justice Committee.
- _Supporting local community events through the provision of print materials, such as the 2014 Prison Justice Film Festival.
- _Actively encouraging political engagement in both the graduate and undergraduate student population. I participated in the organization of the silent demonstration at the January 25th Senate Committee meeting and spoke on the subject in a live interview prior to the demonstration.
- _Developing educational workshops intended to facilitate conversations and the transfer of knowledge and skills pertaining to member mobilization and political organizing. The workshops are tentatively scheduled to take place on Saturday, March 15, 2014 and will be open to all members, as well as graduate students who are not currently TAs and undergraduates, since many of the issues we face as TAs are part of larger structural issues facing academia as a whole.
- _Collecting data relating to the number and circumstances of applicants for our financial aid services in order to impress upon the employer the chronic financial shortages our TAs face in future rounds of bargaining.

For more information on the activities of the Food Bank and Financial Assistance Committees, please read the Food Bank Committee's report and motion as well as the motion pertaining to the financial assistance fund and child care expenses in this agenda.

As ever, if you have any questions or interest in the activities of the committees in my portfolio, please contact me at activism@psac610.ca to set up a meeting.

In solidarity,

Siobhan Watters

Motion to approve the Activism Chair's report

Moved by 28

Seconded by 16

Approved unanimously.

Remarks from Communications Chair in absence of prepared report:

Website is being rebuilt.

Update on Stewards Training data: 84% had not served as stewards before.

Membership survey will be available in March.

Questions?

None

Report From the Chief Steward, Biosciences

1. Steward Solidarity Events

Since many stewards were unsure about the specific details of the Steward Solidarity Events, I drafted a guideline document that was emailed out to my steward network. I received positive responses from stewards, who will be planning their events this semester. This document was also made available to stewards in other departments via our other Chief Stewards. These events are great ways to network with the membership and gain a better understanding of workplace issues, while dissemination information regarding membership benefits (scholarships, EHP, food bank...). Please consider planning your event if you haven't already, before the end of the term is upon us.

2. Green Office Program

Through collaboration with Facilities Management and Sustainability at Western, the PSAC 610 Local Office has enrolled in the Green Office Program. This involved completing a baseline assessment of current sustainability, for which we scored a level of bronze. I am coordinating with Conan, our Office Manager, to implement sustainable initiatives throughout the Union to help improve our score by the end of term, when we will assess our progress once more. My hope is that we will continue our enrolment within this program into the future.

3. Overwork/Tracking Your Hours

As mid-term meetings with course supervisors approach, please remember the following

_It is highly recommended that TAs track their hours

_There are a number of ways to do this using:

- Print or digital copies of the hours tracking form available on the Union website
- Using your agenda or calendar
- A time-tracking app (PSAC 610 is currently looking at developing one specifically for TAs at Western)

_If you are/can see yourself approaching 140 hours please consult the flow chart below. Please feel free to notify a steward/chief steward/ Union executive whenever you are dealing with a situation of potential overwork!

Consult the course supervisor (CS) as soon as possible to make them aware.

CS has the option to reassign hours within the DSL to prevent overwork.

CS could indicate that you should continue working until you reach 140 hours.

If the CS asks you to work over your 140, you have the right to refuse to work over 140 hours.

Stop working after 140 hours.

You can agree to work over 140 hours BUT this must be approved by your department & SGPS in advance in order to be paid overtime.

Thank You For Your Contribution,

Julia Matheson
Chief Biosciences Steward
bioschief@psac610.ca

Motion to accept the Chief Steward for Biosciences' report
Moved by 9
Seconded by 19
Approved unanimously.

Report from the Chief Steward, Arts & Humanities

Update on Steward Positions

All Departments in our division, save two, now have at least one Departmental Steward. Of the 22 positions available, 17 are filled. This is great news! We are still seeking stewards for Modern Languages and Literatures and Film Studies, so if you have colleagues who are GTAs in those departments, it is not too late to become a steward and provide guidance throughout the end of this term and into the summer months. This might be especially helpful for members who will also be around next year and might consider continuing to build their experience as a Departmental Steward.

Update on Chief Steward Activities

This year, I have been involved in the following activities and initiatives:

- Helping to develop the Departmental Steward training sessions, and helping to facilitate these sessions
- Helping to edit the Stewards Handbook
- Speaking at September orientation sessions to provide new TAs with crucial information about the Local
- Working with the Activism Chair and Women's Committee on issues concerning the bureaucratization of support services on campus
- Co-writing an updated and more streamlined information page on the history of the lump-sum issue and Financial Support Package letters for the PSAC 610 website
- Represented the Local on the hiring committee for the pilot Lead Graduate Teaching Assistant program

Member Issues in our Division

Since taking up the position of Chief Steward, I have assisted members with the following workplace issues (some of which are common across the Arts and Humanities, and almost all of which were resolved informally):

- Financial Support Package letters, and their relationship to the Collective Agreement
- Overwork and overwork prevention strategies
- Unpaid overtime hours
- Issues with GTA safety
- Departmental evaluations of GTAs
- The definition of employee status according to the Collective Agreement
- Bullying and harassment

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As always, I urge departmental stewards to continue to remind their members of the following:

- Members should carefully track their hours to avoid overwork
- Members cannot be asked to perform duties or work hours not outlined in the DSA unless mutually agreed upon between the member and the TA supervisor
- Members must have a mid-point check-in meeting with their TA supervisor to go over the DSA approximately halfway through the term. This ensures that the extant distribution of hours is working for both parties, and helps solve potential problems before they even occur. Changes to the DSA resulting from this meeting can only be made if they are mutually agreed upon between the member and the TA supervisor
- Members should be encouraged to speak to you, the Departmental Steward, or to myself if they are experiencing a situation in which the terms of the Collective Agreement are being violated, or if they have any questions about their GTAship or the Local.

Western's New Strategic Plan

The implementation of Western's new Strategic Plan (which has now been made official) will potentially have a major negative impact on the Arts and Humanities. The plan appears to favour the STEM faculties (which provide more opportunities for corporate sponsorship) over faculties such as the Arts and Humanities, and continues to perpetuate the current climate of austerity. This will greatly influence our working conditions as TAs, including (but not limited to) larger class sizes and less funding. A detailed analysis (provided by a FIMS undergraduate student representative) relevant not only to FIMS students but to undergraduates and graduate students across the Arts and Humanities can be found here:

<http://openwidezine.com/2014/01/20/fims-absent-future-the-unspoken-realities-of-westerns-new-strategic-plan-and-what-we-can-do-about-it/>

The Strategic Plan was passed despite a massive silent protest by students at Western on Friday, January 31st, but this is not the end of the issue nor is it our last opportunity to resist the conditions under which such a Strategic Plan can be implemented in the first place. I encourage you to keep a watchful eye out for ways in which you can become involved in the fight against labour issues relating to the new plan through the Local, as well as other ways to respond to the broader challenges facing the Arts and Humanities.

Steward Solidarity Events

I recently circulated an email to all Arts and Humanities stewards that contained a reminder about Steward Solidarity Events. Also attached was a .pdf document with detailed instructions and contact information for planning events. We have only had one solidarity event in the Arts and Humanities so far, and as the winter semester is already well underway, planning for this term's solidarity events should start as soon as possible. As I've mentioned to a few folks, joining up with another department to host a joint solidarity event can be a great way to connect with members across different departments. However, you can also do an event with just the TAs in your department! Please don't hesitate to let me know if I can be of assistance, and I look forward to attending your events and meeting members in your department.

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Thank you all for continuing to represent your departments and for all that you do to help your fellow GTAs! It is a privilege to serve as your Chief Steward, and I am grateful to each and every one of you for your ongoing support of the Local and its members.

In solidarity,

Diana Samu-Visser
Chief Steward for Arts and Humanities

Motion to approve Chief Steward for Arts and Humanities' report
Moved by 11
Seconded by 6
Approved unanimously.

Report from the Chief Steward, Social Sciences

Hello Stewards;

I'm sorry I could not be at today's meeting to provide my report in person. I was able to visit my folks in Florida over reading week and my flight does not land until late in the evening the day of the meeting.

First of all, I would like to thank you for your ongoing dedication to PSAC Local 610. Without you, the Local would not be able to reach out to and assist members with their workplace issues on as broad a scale as it is through the work you do in your role as a Steward.

Secondly, Stewards in three departments – Geography, History, and Political Science – have scheduled solidarity events for the month of March. In mid-January I sent all of you information about how to run a solidarity event and provided you with a list of all of the TAs in your department to whom you can direct your event's invitation. If you did not receive this email or would like another copy of it, please contact me to let me know; I am happy to (re)send it to you. If you have planned an event, but have yet to inform me of the date of your event, please do so soon so that the Local can better evaluate how successful the program is this year. For those of you who have not yet planned an event, please consider doing so and help the Local to continue this annual tradition! If you need some assistance to plan and/or book an event, I am happy to help you with this. Finally, for those of you who have already planned an event, please remember to send me a short report about it afterwards! Information that you can include in your report includes: the number of attendees; the kinds of questions members asked you; things members did not know about the Local; and any workplace issues/problems that were brought to your attention.

No workplace problems or grievable issues within the Division of Social Science have been brought to my attention since my last report in November. However, I would like to ask you to remind your members of the (potential) for overwork. This is a common problem within the social sciences, but one that many TAs simply choose to ignore, which is a major problem. You will recall that TAs cannot be expected to work more than 140 hours per term; more than 8 hours per day; and more than 20 hours per week. This is one of the most important rights we have as TAs within our Collective Agreement. If a member is experiencing or coming close to

encountering an issue of overwork *it is crucial that they immediately report this situation to their supervisor* and revise their duties accordingly to ensure they do not work beyond the 140 hour maximum. *SGPS has informed the Local that TAs may not exceed the 140 hour maximum without their prior approval. This means that any overtime hours must be approved by SGPS before a TA works those hours. If overtime hours are worked and reported to SGPS after they have been completed, SGPS may not approve paying the TA for those hours.* This is why it is so crucial that TAs stop working once they have reached 140 hours in order to ensure that SGPS agrees to pay them for any overtime hours they may work. An individual TA *may agree* to work beyond 140 hours per term,

but their supervisor should seek approval from SGPS to do so first in order to ensure the TA is paid for all of the work that they perform.

If you have any questions or concerns about my report, your role as a Steward, or issues within your department, please feel free to contact me at: socialscichief@psac610.ca.

In solidarity,

Amanda Vyce, Chief Steward Social Sciences

Motion to approve the Chief Steward Social Sciences' report

Moved by 3

Seconded by 28

Approved unanimously.

Food Bank Committee Report

The work of the food bank committee is to provide relief for members of the local who are experiencing unexpected financial shortages. Specifically, the FBC aims to ameliorate a situation in which a member is unable to purchase food for themselves and/or dependents due to these unexpected financial shortfalls.

Prior to 2012, possibly due to mismanagement or poor awareness of the available aid, the food bank's budget of \$6000 was never exhausted. As such, in the year 2012-2013, the FBC put energy into advertising to increase the profile of this service. The fund was finally on the radar of our membership and began to be used at an increasing rate, showing that there is truly a great need for financial assistance among the local's members. By the end of the committee's year-long tenure, the fund had run out.

With almost no additional advertising besides the information delivered generally about union services during orientation and union training events, the fund has been continually and increasingly drawn upon by our members this year. As of now—well before the end of the union's operating year (i.e., June 2013 – June 2014)—the fund has been completely exhausted. We believe this is evidence of the great need exhibited by our members, about which we will present a data-based report at this year's AGM. In its first year of maximized use in 2012-2013, the fund's original amount of \$6000 had been completely exhausted. This year, the original amount of \$6000 has already proved to be insufficient. The FBC voted earlier this month, as an emergency measure, to move the money earmarked for our committee's operations (\$1000) into the food bank fund. We felt this emergency measure was necessary to address the applications

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that are still coming into the union office at a steady rate. This operations money can only cover the backlog of applications that already exist. As such, we have no funds to cover the continuing needs of our members.

Knowing that the fund was not well promoted in the past and seeing the difference that increased awareness has made, the current trends of food bank use gives us a more accurate picture of member need and the underlying reality that TAs are chronically underpaid. While we fight to increase our compensation every bargaining year, the union will continue to protect members and help ameliorate these circumstances as best as possible. An increase in the food bank fund is required to continue to meet the needs of the membership this year. This will allow the disbursement of aid to TAs and their dependents for the remainder of the operating year. We therefore propose to increase the fund by a further \$3000, for a total of \$10,000 to better reflect the needs of the membership. The FBC will also recommend that in the budget proposal for 2014-2015, that the food bank fund be permanently set at \$10,000 until such time as another increase is warranted, or we see TA compensation raised to an amount adequate to the sustenance of basic needs.

Motion to accept report

Moved by Food Bank Committee

Seconded by 28

Approved unanimously.

Motions

Motion #1

Whereas the Food Bank fund budget of \$6000 has been exhausted,
Whereas applications are still coming into the union office at a high rate, showing that there is a great need for this service among the membership,
BIRT the FBC fund be increased by an additional \$3000 to meet the needs of the membership until the new operating year begins and the fund is replenished (i.e., June 2014).

Moved by the Food Bank Committee

Seconded by 26

Siobhan: Last year there was much advertising, none this year because awareness is there. Need is there. Applications often come from international students, many have children. It's hard to say no when children are involved.

Diana: As Mary already mentioned with member need and Siobhan with food bank, there is serious member need involved here. This is one of the ways to give back.

Atle (in favour): A political point: we can demonstrate to employer the need that exists. We shouldn't need this or an FAC, but do because we are not paid enough.

Brian: What confidence do we have that this is enough money to get us through to the next chance to revisit this?

Siobhan: Based on averages, this is how we came to this amount.

Brian: Does running out kill the momentum?

Siobhan: Valid point. The fund was never exhausted until now, so momentum is new. Maybe the availability of the food bank was under-reported until now. This is the most direct, quickly redeemed fund we have.

Motion carried unanimously.

Motion #2

Whereas PSAC Local 610 recognizes that affordable child care is vital to the ability of workers who are parents to complete their work duties;

Whereas PSAC Local 610 recognizes that the cost of accessing quality child care in Ontario is a significant financial burden for members who are parents;

BIRT PSAC Local 610 accept and endorse the revised disbursement policy of the Financial Assistance Committee (Appendix A), which includes funding for child care expenses.

Moved by the Administration Chair

Seconded by 28.

Mary: I already motivated for this in my report, so I will only say that I hope to see strong acceptance of this so that we can show a united front to the employer.

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Atle (In favour): I am glad to see this and wish it had been done before. I know in FIMS alone there are many parents.

Motion carried unanimously.

Motion #3

Whereas about 25% of the cheques issued towards the International TA UHIP Refund do not get picked up almost every year;

Whereas the unclaimed money keeps accumulating in the bank;

BIRT the stewards accept the attached International TA UHIP Refund policy.

Moved by the Finance Committee

Jubayer: Could Mary or Dave explain how L/MC works?

Dave: The money comes from employer, so we must seek approval from that body.

Eric: This is a starting point to see how best to disburse this.

15: It's good to make this an application system, but is it not better to raise minimum?

Jubayer: How did we come up with \$100? We divided 40,000 by number of eligible people if everyone picked up cheque. We could raise it later, if necessary.

Dave: You could move to amend.

Amendment by 15 to increase to \$150

28 seconded

15: It's good for international students to have more funding.

Atle: The amount is more likely to get people to access the funds.

Brian 38: I am concerned, that we are falling within employer's paradigm of nickel-and-diming. Can we increase the fund?

Dave: It's in the collective agreement. But we could seek more, but not changeable now.

Brian: We are kind of buying in by splitting. Can we incorporate the two?

Jubayer: They are still somewhat incorporated because surplus goes to TA needs (FAC).

Eric (in favour of amendment): By keeping it separate, we can use it to our benefit by saying the funds need to be increased.

Question called on amendment:

Amendment passes unanimously

33: This is only a temporary solution. Budget itself is not high enough, but this is an effective first step.

Atle: I move to call the question.

Question called

6 abstained

Motion carried.

Motion #4

Whereas the Executives and the Office staffs have been enrolled into the CRA payroll system;
Whereas the Local has to match the employer portion of the tax to pay CRA;
Whereas the employer portion of the tax was not budgeted for the year
2013-2014;
BIRT the Local allocates not more than \$9,000 from the general reserve towards the
employer portion of the tax for the year 2013-2014.

Moved by the Finance Chair

Jubayer: This year from January 2014, the EC and staff are now on payroll. The Local has to pay Canada Revenue Agency. We did not budget for this. We need to change now so we are asking approval, so that this will be built into next year's budget.

Carried unanimously.

Adjourned 7:00 PM

Appendix A

Disbursement Policy for the Financial Assistance Committee

The Financial Assistance Fund exists to provide assistance to members who experience unexpected financial need. TAs who have held a teaching assistantship for at least one term in an academic year are eligible. This fund is structured as a series of streams to meet the unexpected needs of members who have exceptional demands upon their finances. This policy exists to define such needs, and how the Committee is authorized to respond to and assist applicants. The Committee recognizes the issues of student poverty within PSAC Local 610. However, the Committee must fund applications according to preferential criteria and in accordance with the priorities and procedures set for us by the Employer's Labour/Management Committee. Regrettably, we cannot offer funding to all applicants. The Committee recognizes and categorizes applications according to four major streams: medical emergencies, personal emergencies, academic/conference travel, and child care. The Committee allots the majority of the Financial Aid Fund to medical and personal expenses and gives priority to expenses that are unexpected and unavoidable. Therefore, expenses cannot arise from basic living costs, such as rent or utilities payments.

While the Financial Assistance Committee (FAC) cannot offer funding for general living expenses, such as food or groceries, the Local does offer assistance through the Food Bank program. Members are encouraged to apply to this program, should they feel the need to do so. Although we offer limited funding for some academic expenses, the Committee cannot act as a substitute for departmental or external funding, nor can we fund tuition or any other academic fee.

To apply, fill out the application form. You will need to attach ALL relevant receipts for expenses claimed. You will also need to have signed your union card (the blue card). Applicants must be members of the Local at the time of the expense.

Applications are considered throughout the year. Please allow time for a response from the Committee. The Committee aims to respond to all applications within one month. Applicants will be notified of decisions by email, and if your application has been successful, you can pick up your cheque at the Local's office.

The Financial Aid Fund is limited, and, unfortunately, not all applications can be approved. You may receive a bursary that was not the full amount of your request. These circumstances are based on several factors: need, available funds, and number of applicants. If your application was declined and you want to know why, please contact the Committee chairperson. Be advised that in contacting the Committee about your application, you will have self-identified, that is to say, your application is no longer anonymous.

The application process assures your confidentiality:

Each applicant is assigned an ID number.

Applications are reviewed without any identifying information.

Committee members must sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement before adjudicating applications.

Applications are kept on file for future use in characterizing members' needs for future rounds of negotiations.

Applications must be filled out in full to receive consideration. The Committee will verify the receipts appended to the application. Only documented expenses for which receipts are included shall be considered.

While the Committee has the authority to fund or deny any application, the following criteria express the Committee's preferences.

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Unlikely to be funded:

- Petcare expenses
- Passport fees, Visa applications or permanent residency fees
- Vehicle expenses
- UHIP expenses
- Textbook purchases, tuition fees
- Technology purchases, unless these can be explicitly justified
- Conference fees or membership fees
- And any other expense that does not qualify as “unexpected need”

Exceptions in the above cases, while extremely unlikely, are possible, at the Financial Assistance Committee’s discretion based upon the applicant’s justification. Applicants who have exceeded their maximum disbursement (\$500) in a single term cannot apply again in the same term. Support for personal and medical emergencies can only be received once per term up to a cumulative amount of \$500. Support for academic expenses can only be received up to a cumulative amount of \$300 in an academic year (September - August). The terms divide into Summer (June-August), Fall (September-December) and Winter (January-April). Application adjudication periods divide according to the months in the calendar (1st-31st). Should the expense claimed exceed the allotted \$500 within a single term, the applicant may apply in the next term for the remainder of the same expense. However, new and previously unfunded claims take precedence.

The following types of expenses can be funded, with appropriate justification:

- 1) Medical Emergencies (maximum \$500 per term)

- These include emergency medical or dental bills, including bills incurred outside Canada
- Please ensure you have applied for and exhausted your eligible SOGS health plan and EHP benefits
- You may claim for a dependent, such as a child, spouse or parent

- 2) Personal Emergencies (maximum \$500 per term)

- Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Bereavement travel expenses
 - Financial difficulties related to separating from a spouse or partner
 - Loss of property due to an unforeseen catastrophe: house fire, flood, etc.
- Please ensure you include receipts and an rationale for a brief description of the nature of the emergency
- The Committee keeps all such private and personal information confidential

- 3) Academic/Conference Travel (maximum \$300 per academic year)

- Please demonstrate proof that you have applied to your department and SOGS for travel funding prior to applying to the FAC
- Please enclose records of your participation at the conference (e.g. approved abstract, photocopy of conference program, etc.) and receipts
- The Committee will only consider applications in which the applicant was an approved participant in the academic conference (e.g. as a presenter of a paper or poster, a responder, a panel chair or organizer, etc.)
- The Committee will not fund conference or membership fees
- The Committee will not fund food expenses

Members are encouraged to contact the Secretary (administration@psac610.ca) or the committee Chair (fac@psac610.ca) should they have questions about the Financial Assistance funding process.

- 4) Child Care Subsidy (maximum \$500 per academic year)

The Financial Assistance Committee is pleased to offer a subsidy to help members of PSAC Local 610 offset the considerable cost burden of accessing quality child care while they complete their work as teaching assistants. We recognize that as well as balancing their duties as workers, researchers, and students, members who are parents must manage additional financial and personal responsibilities. This subsidy is offered as part of a pilot program that seeks to address child care as a serious member need, and also to gather vital data on how our membership is affected by the cost of child care in Ontario.

- _The Committee and PSAC Local 610 may use non-identifying information from applications, such as the financial cost of child care, etc., in order to gather data about how our membership is affected by this issue.
- _Please enclose the appropriate documentation and receipts with your application.
- _Members are also encouraged to apply to SOGS Child Care Subsidy.
- _Only receipts from licensed childcare providers and programs will be considered for the subsidy. For a list of licensed child care providers, go to <http://www.iaccess.gov.on.ca/LCCWeb/childcare/search.xhtml>

Appendix B

International TA UHIP Refund Policy (Revised)

1. General

From the letter of understanding in the Collective Agreement for the period September 2012 to August 2015, “In the years 2013, 2014 and 2015, the employer shall provide to the Local by January 31st the amount of \$35,000 and by May 31st \$40,000 for use as the GTA Financial Fund.” In the budget of the PSAC Local 610, this \$35,000 goes towards the TA Needs and Bursaries Program and \$40,000 goes towards International TA UHIP Refund program. This policy is for how to disburse \$40,000 for the International TA UHIP Refund Program.

2. Eligibility

Any member in good standing who is an International Student with valid Study Permit and pays for UHIP during an academic year is eligible upon fulfilling the application requirements.

3. Process of disbursement

- i. Every year the disbursement shall be given once in the Winter term.
- ii. The application to receive the disbursement shall be on-line. The information provided by the applicants should include but not limited to applicants’ name and student number.
- iii. Each year the application process shall open by no later than March 16th and close by no later than March 31st.
- iv. Within the Collective Agreement period 2012-2015, the amount \$40,000 shall be divided by the number of eligible applicants and each eligible applicant shall receive a cheque equal to the outcome of the division or ~~\$100~~ \$150 whichever is the lowest.
- v. The disbursement cheques shall be ready by no later than April 15th of the corresponding academic year.
- vi. Any remaining amount after the disbursement shall be transferred to the TA Financial Assistance Program budget line item for the following year.

4. Future Recommendations

- i. The amount \$40,000 shall be updated based on the Collective Agreement.
- ii. Providing disbursement twice a year can be considered.
- iii. Number of Dependents of the eligible members can also be considered.